

BOARD OF REGENTS FOR ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

Middletown High School
130 Valley Rd.
Middletown, RI
Thursday, October 7, 2010 4:00 p.m.

MINUTES

Attending: R. Flanders, P. Guida, K. Forbes, A. Cano-Morales,
B. Shimberg

The meeting convened at 4:05 p.m.

Judge Flanders welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked Middletown Superintendent Rosemarie Kraeger and the principal of Middletown High School, Steven Ruscito, for hosting the meeting. He also recognized Sue Stenhouse, the Director of Community Relations for the Governor's Office.

Commissioner's Report

RTTT Update – Commissioner Gist reported to the group that the Race to the Top steering committee had met at the Rhode Island Foundation and there had been a good representation of education stakeholders attending the meeting. On Tuesday evening, a meeting has been scheduled to meet with school-district representatives to talk about the implementation of the grant at the local level.

State Schools Boards of Trustees – Next, the Commissioner spoke about the state schools boards of trustees. She reviewed the packet of information given to the members of the Board: a chart showing the legal citations governing the state schools boards of trustees and an overview of their memberships, makeup, powers and duties, and bylaws. The group spoke briefly about the appointment process and the need to be more proactive. It was decided that this item would be brought back for a more in-depth discussion at a future meeting. Regent Cano-Morales suggested that the group look at accountability issues, specifically regarding how the boards are actually doing.

Bullying –In light of the events of the previous weeks concerning bullying and suicides among LGBTQ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer) youth, Commissioner Gist spoke to the Board about the work that RIDE has been involved with over the last twenty years to support LGBTQ youth and what RIDE plans to do in the future to be more proactive to ensure that similar events do not occur in Rhode Island. RIDE plans to:

- Communicate with teachers and school leaders to ensure that there is a widespread awareness about this issue and the availability about local resources;
- Immediately convene state agency leaders, school and district leaders, higher-education leadership, YPI, youth groups, and community-based agencies to develop a short- and long-term plan; and

- Review and, if necessary, strengthen current guidance to the field on the handling of bullying, harassment, and discrimination of all students and especially those most likely to be affected.

Public Remarks

Steven Ruscito, principal of Middletown High School, welcomed the Regents to the high school.

Karen Izzo, teacher at East Greenwich High School and the parent of a gay son, spoke to the group about the need for school districts to implement anti-bullying policies.

She charged the Board of Regents to support statewide anti-bullying programs.

James Robinson, Executive Director of Youth Pride, spoke about how Youth Pride can be a resource for districts, teachers, and students.

Chairman's Remarks

Chairman Flanders recognized Grace Small, Lincoln High School social studies teacher, to be honored by the Regents as a distinguished teacher. Ms. Small spoke to the group about her project working with Lincoln High School and 4th and 5th-grade students on a project called "Abraham Lincoln: A Man of His Times, A Man for All Times," and Chairman Flanders presented her with a Board of Regents certificate of recognition.

Chairman Flanders told the Board that he would like to continue the practice of recognizing teachers as part of the Regents' monthly meetings. There were no objections.

Approval of Minutes of the Board of Regents Meeting of September 2, 2010; and September 14, 2010 Work Session and Executive Session

MOVED AND SECONDED: THAT, the Rhode Island Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education Approves the September 2, 2010, Meeting Minutes and September 14, 2010, Work Session and Executive Session Minutes.

VOTE: Approved Unanimously.

APPROVAL ITEMS

Approval of Appeals

Leora Cieplinski v. The Metropolitan Regional Career and Technical Center

In the absence of the Appeals Committee Chair Amy Beretta, Regent Karin Forbes read each recommended appeal decision. Chairman Flanders reminded the group that all of the Regents had received the decisions as part of their agenda packets earlier in the week.

MOVED AND SECONDED: THAT in the Matter of Leora Cieplinski v. The Metropolitan Regional Career and Technical Center, the Decision of the Commissioner is Affirmed.

VOTE: Approved Unanimously.

Kingston Hill Academy and The Compass Charter School v. Chariho Regional School District

MOVED AND SECONDED: THAT in the Matter of Kingston Hill Academy and The Compass Charter School v. Chariho Regional School District, the Decision of the Commissioner is Vacated and Reversed (on the holding of the underlying decision that the reference year established by RI General Laws 16-7-16 is the proper basis for the calculation of Chariho's tuition obligations to appellants); and, with regard to Chariho's cross-appeal, the Interlocutory Decision of the Commissioner (issued on March 1, 2010) is affirmed.

VOTE: Approved Unanimously.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

Review of High-School Graduation Requirements

Commissioner Gist reminded the members of the Board that this agenda item is a continuation of their deliberations on changes to graduation requirements as set forth in the 2008 Secondary Regulations and that they had told RIDE staff that their concerns about the impact of the regulations include the high number of ELL and special-education students who will not meet the 2012 graduation requirement of partially proficient on the NECAP and the number of students who are in unapproved systems. Also during the last meeting of the Regents subcommittee on the graduation requirements, the Regents reviewed the pertinent sections of the regulations, the NECAP data, and the results of the 2010 Commissioner's Review that indicate a significant impact on the class of 2012. Some of the options that will be offered to the members of the Board at the next work session include:

- NECAP retest in the senior year;
- Allow students to take a different standardized assessment as a proxy for NECAP;
- Offer a Regents diploma or local diploma awarded to students meeting partially proficient on NECAP and a local diploma for those students not partially proficient on NECAP;
- Allow districts to make graduation decisions for students not partially proficient on NECAP based on other local assessments and measures; and
- Delay the implementation of this requirement due to the pending arrival of Common Core and PARCC.

Review of Charter-School Proposal

The Commissioner reminded the Regents that at their September 14th work session staff had presented draft revisions and updates of the charter-school accountability protocols. RIDE staff member Jennifer Smith reviewed some of the proposed revisions, including recommendations from the RIDE Legal Department, and walked the group through the power point. The protocols will be brought back before the Board for approval at the November 4th meeting.

Overview of NECAP Science Results

Commissioner Gist reported on the results of the Rhode Island NECAP Science Assessments, as follows:

- All tested grades (4, 8, and 11) across the state this year had a higher percentage of students who scored in the proficient category;
- In grade 4, approximately 44 percent of students were proficient or above;
- In grade 8, nearly 23 percent of students were at or above proficient; and
- Grade 11 had the smallest gain (up only 1%), with roughly 21 percent of students across the state scoring at or above proficient.

Budget Review

Commissioner Gist opened the next agenda item: a discussion of FY 2012 budget and the revised FY 2011 budget. She spoke to the Board about the significant deficit expected in FY 2012. She said that for FY 2012 the Budget Office asked for a 15% reduction, prioritized in 5% increments. The entire Department budget, including the state schools, education aid, teacher retirement, and school housing aid, was subject to this reduction. Although the Department has produced a list of potential reductions within the ACES program, the Commissioner said it is highly unlikely that she will recommend any reductions in education aid funding for FY 2012, including for the state schools. She reminded the Regents that in the FY 2011 enacted budget, school districts and charter public schools had aid reduced by 3.8%, or \$26.3M. Additionally, in many communities local contributions decreased by an additional 5% due to the change in the MOE statute.

Commissioner Gist urged the group to remember that it is very important that the momentum behind the education funding formula continue to ensure implementation of this important policy; therefore, the Department will recommend funding of year 1, which will mean a slight overall increase in education aid. The distribution of aid will be dependent on the transition plan and will mean increases for some districts while others will experience reductions. Funding year 1 of the funding formula is the Department's highest priority.

RIDE staff member Marliot Uzcategui reviewed the proposed FY 2011 revised budget and the FY 2012 budget, as distributed. Ms. Uzcategui walked the Regents through the FY 2011 enacted budget, including the enacted source of funding and category of expenditures. She also reviewed the General Revenue revised budget for FY 11 and changes to the FY 2012 constrained general-revenue budget. Proposed operating reductions included FY 2012 personnel adjustments for state schools, nutrition programs, Commissioner's Office, capital-lease print shop, E-rate, Uniform Chart of

Accounts, Legislative Grants, Nonpublic School Textbook Aid, Physics First, Regents Fellow (shifted to federal funds), I-Plan Consultants, and Science Kits. She also reviewed, in detail, FY 2012 Funding Formula adjustments, state schools adjustments and school housing-aid and teacher-retirement adjustments. The complete budget package is attached.

Commissioner Gist emphasized that, as always, the Department stands ready to work with the Governor and the Legislature in the upcoming budget season; however, the Department has submitted constrained budgets over the last three consecutive years, which has resulted in significant savings. Additionally, Commissioner Gist noted that, as part of the FY 2012 budget submission, the Department will have the opportunity to describe for the next Governor what optimum current service program operations would cost for RIDE. Given the massive projected deficit in FY 2012, it is highly unlikely that any increases will be funded in the coming year. Nevertheless, the Department will include such a description in the budget narrative or in the cover letter.

Executive Session

As per RIGL 42-46-5(a)(1) Commissioner's Evaluation, the meeting adjourned at 6:20 p.m.

The meeting reconvened to open session at 6:45 p.m.

Chairman Flanders reported that during Executive Session there were no votes taken.

Adjournment: With unanimous consent, the meeting adjourned at 6:50 p.m.